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1. [\*Starting a food fight against credibility\*](#)

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## **Starting a food fight against credibility**

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### **Body**

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Bored Panda once published "89 of the Funniest Protest Signs Ever."

As clickbait goes, this was worth the click. Protest signs around the world included: "Without Immigrants Trump Would Have No Wives." "What Do We Want? TIME TRAVEL. When Do We Want It? IT'S IRRELEVANT." "Legalize Gay Marijuana." "Stop Premature Christmas Decorating!"

And my favourite: "I'm So Angry I Made a Sign."

Another protester was equally ironic: "If Your Beliefs Fit on a Sign, Think Harder ..." One lad used a placard to hurl the most savage insult ever at a politician: "Rahm Emanuel Likes Nickelback."

Alas, not every protester grasps the power of subtlety. Or as Aesop put it, "Persuasion is often more effectual than force."

You know what's never persuasive? Vandalism.

But for some reason, eco warriors have decided to sound the alarm on climate change by ... attacking art masterpieces with foodstuff? This is like protesting the cost of living by dumping your life savings into a bonfire.

Security in museums used to be obsessed with theft. Now guards are on the lookout for anyone intent on defacing a Rembrandt with ravioli.

Inside the Barberini Museum in Germany this weekend, two protesters were arrested after splashing Claude Monet's "Grainstacks" with mashed potatoes and then gluing their hands to the wall.

The use of industrial adhesives as the opposite of a getaway is an odd evolution in civil disobedience. Protesters once tried to elude capture. Now as the cops are en route, these scolding nutters are pasting themselves to their own crime scenes.

At London's National Gallery this month, two "Just Stop Oil" protesters doused Vincent van Gogh's "Sunflowers" with Heinz tomato soup and then also broke out the Gorilla Glue.

It's baffling. A love of nature animated van Gogh, which is why he worked in olive groves and out in the elements, even if his painting was slowed by the need to remove flies and dirt from the canvas. In his brief 37 years, van Gogh had a smaller carbon footprint than any modern **climate activist** racks up in a week. He was a true environmentalist.

And Monet didn't drive a Hummer.

## Starting a food fight against credibility

After the Heinz assault, one protester explained her actions: "We're not asking the question, 'Should everybody be throwing soup on paintings?' What we're doing is getting the conversation going so we can ask the questions that matter."

Is that so? Yes, these protests are generating global headlines. But sophomoric vandalism won't get anyone to ponder existential questions about climate change any more than obscene balloon animals can bring actionable clarity to racial inequality. Sorry, climate activists, smearing cake on the Mona Lisa will not trigger any meaningful conversations.

However noble the cause, spraying Dali with clam chowder will only kill your message. When I see footage of these activists - hair dyed with chemicals, smartphones made in foreign sweatshops, palms glued with toxic compounds - I don't see saviours of Planet Earth.

I see misguided fools.

Supporters of the art vandals will argue more extreme acts are necessary to slice through the noise of cultural apathy as the world sleepwalks toward catastrophe. This is twisted logic. After a Monet classic valued at more than \$110 million was splashed with 50 cents worth of mashed potatoes this weekend, nobody was talking about climate change.

People were too busy boiling with disgust.

The eco warriors don't understand how means can short-circuit the end.

You could see this clearly last year in Europe when activists staged sit-ins on motorways during rush hour. First, creating gridlock that forces idling vehicles to spew even more carbon monoxide and sulphur oxide into the atmosphere seems neither sensible nor environmentally friendly.

We are protesting for animal rights by sacrificing a kitten.

But what should have forced climate protesters to rethink their methods was the reaction of onlookers. When fed-up motorists exited their vehicles and started dragging activists to the shoulder like sacks of turnips, that was the wake-up call. That was the moment reality put good intentions in a chokehold. You can't limit fossil fuels or champion renewable energy or ultimately engender a livable planet by doing things that make everyone else want to punch you in the mouth.

From disrupting traffic to weaponizing meatballs against a Matisse - thank goodness most famous works of art are protected behind glass - none of this is going to advance the dialogue around climate change.

As Dana Fisher, a sociology professor at the University of Maryland, told the Washington Post this week: "Research shows that this kind of tactic doesn't work to change minds and hearts."

Why art is viewed as a high-value target for attack that might bring about political and cultural change is not entirely clear. You're not going to get far protesting vaccine mandates by squirting Mr. Clean on a Cézanne.

But the art vandalism this month is not without precedent.

More than a century ago, long before the tomato soup and mashed potatoes were flying willy-nilly, suffragist Mary Richardson strolled into London's National Gallery and took a meat cleaver to Diego Velázquez's "The Rokeby Venus." Michelangelo's famous sculpture "The Pietà" was once damaged in a hammer assault. More than a decade ago, a cast of Rodin's "The Thinker" was vandalized in Argentina after assailants added a bicep tattoo. It seems art vandals rarely think.

That's what these protesters are now doing: Not thinking. The eco warriors throwing mashed potatoes and tomato soup on famous paintings have started a food fight with their own credibility.

## Starting a food fight against credibility

Instead of raising attention, they've become a pathetic spectacle.

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